1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

361 *dampa*. A further question at once arises: what are the principles which govern
571 the formation of these subsidiary *dampa* groups?

81. In general, they are the same principles as those which determine the composition of the long-house community itself: any cognatic relationship traced from any member (natal, adopted or affinal) of a *bilek* family is sufficient to ensure entry to any *dampa* group. But this principle operates, of course, only when virgin forest is being worked; in an area of secondary jungle all land is owned, and this fact pre-limits the composition of *dampa* groups; i.e. they are a re-association of the *bilek* families responsible for the felling of the original forest. Furthermore, it does occasionally happen that entirely unrelated *bilek* families will combine in establishing a *dampa*. In these cases the basis of association is friendship arising from prolonged residence in the same long-house community. One such instance occurred at Rumah Nyala (e.g. Usah, No. 12 and Majau, No. 13). In the great majority of cases, however, kinship is the articulating principle, but it is essential to realize that bilateral kinship presents *bilek* families with a very wide choice. Any tie, from siblingship to remote cousinship, may be selected and made the vinculum of an association. A detailed analysis of the kinship composition of the *dampa* groups of Rumah Nyala, shows considerable variation. There are eight instances of siblings, who are senior members of their respective *bilek* families, living together in a common *dampa*; but, six other pairs of senior siblings are living in different homesteads. Again, in only two instances did *bilek* families occupying adjacent apartments in the main long-house (e.g. No. 7 and No. 8; No. 17 and No. 18), live side by side in the same *dampa*. The
● [157] *dampa* system thus offers opportunities for innovation and change which are congenial to the Iban temperament, and entirely consistent with the tenets of Iban social organization. What does emerge very clearly is the salient and vital principle that every *bilek* family is independent, possessing the right to accentuate, for its own purposes, any tie of bilateral kinship within the total community to which it belongs.

The Rôle of the Bilek Family in Padi Cultivation

X 243 82. We have now seen that each *bilek* family lives as near as it can to the land
592 which it is farming, combining, where possible, with other families that happen
476 to be working in the same area, to form a *dampa* group. From life in these small residential groups the Iban derive many psychological satisfactions, and there is always the reassurance that in time of crisis—birth, sickness and death—there are kith and kin close at hand to offer sympathy and help. But in economic organization the *dampa* group is of minor importance, for among the Iban there is an absence, in agricultural affairs, of any kind of communal ownership, production or consumption. At certain stages in the farming cycle, *bilek* families (though not always from the same *dampa*) do form small co-operative work-groups, but here the principle is one of labour-exchange, governed by strict
X 243 reciprocity. Never does it happen that two or more *bilek* families work a common
592 tract of land on a crop-sharing basis. Instead, each *bilek* family manages its own farm as a completely independent unit, and has absolute rights of ownership over whatever crops it succeeds in producing. This fact of the autonomy of the *bilek* family, we may single out as the fundamental feature of Iban economic organization. Year by year, each *bilek* family brings into cultivation a tract of land (in most cases it is about four or five acres in extent), from which to provide for its subsistence, and, if conditions be propitious, to produce a surplus for the purchase

4: Roth E-4 (no date) 1891 OC6 Iban OC6

examine the entrails; if the reading is unfavourable, they abandon the house. If the post of a house gives way, it is looked upon as an unlucky omen. If a dog climb up into a house that is being built when the gongs are beating, it must be killed. If anything uncanny happens in a house, for which they cannot account (such as the finding of blood on a mat during absence of the inmates), it is supposed to be caused by a spirit, and they resort to the usual rites to avert the omen, by killing a pig. If the reading of the entrails prove unsatisfactory the house is abandoned, be it ever so good. If the *katupong* enters a house at one end and flies out by the other it is an omen. The *katupong*, according to Dyak belief, is not really a bird, but a supernatural being married to *Dara Ensing Tamaga*, the eldest daughter of *Sin Yalang Durong*, the god of war, and takes the form of this bird to warn Dyaks of approaching danger. When this occurs, flight is instant, men and women snatch up a few necessaries (mats and rice) and stampede, leaving everything unsecured and doors unfastened. If any one approaches the house at night, he will see large and shadowy demons chasing each other through it, and hear their unintelligible talk. After a while the people return and erect the ladder they have overthrown, and the women sprinkle the house with water "to cool it."

The Sedumat and Kalakan Dyaks of Lundu believe that when an eclipse occurs some large animal in the shape of a dog is worrying the moon (or sun) and they bring out their brass-ware and portions of food to present them as offerings to appease this powerful beast. They then fire guns, beat gongs, scream out, and make all the noise they can to drive him away.

The chief of the Uma Lesong tribe gave me a *tukar do*, a kind of sun dial with which is measured the shadow of the meridian sun in a certain month of the year, and by its length is determined the season to plant with advantage. If the shadow be such and such a length the yield will be plenteous, if such and such another length it will be meagre, and if it be a certain other length there will be plenty, but there will be weeping as well.

After three the Dyak's favourite number is seven.

Dyaks are so unreasonable that they expect to get everything their own way, and feel aggrieved if they do not. If they do not get dry weather when they want it, they pray for it, and try to propitiate the deity with offerings. If this fail they fancy someone must have committed an unnatural crime (incest, to wit), and they strive to find out such an offender, and lay upon him the blame for all the trouble they are experiencing.

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

known, may easily result in limited views and imperfect conceptions. But when his residence has extended over many years, and he knows the language as well as his own; when he has had constant opportunities of observing their tone and conduct in every relation of life, and of hearing how they talk and think on every imaginable subject, and of seeing how they behave at home as well as abroad—how they bear themselves, not only to an occasional white man whom they meet, but also to each other in social dealings—when he thus lives in close touch with them at every point, he cannot but obtain a thorough understanding of the realities of their lives.

And the Sea Dyaks are generally a very communicative people. They will willingly give information about every belief and custom, and will quietly discuss every practice and every event, good or bad; and it needs only a little patience and sympathy to enable one to get an insight into the working of their minds, and to realize the true character of their actions in the struggles, the comedies, or the tragedies of their lives.

Mr. Gomes is thus able to make the Sea Dyak live before us in genuine colours. We can see this dusky son of the jungle in his beliefs and fears, which are many, in his work and in his play, in his ugly faults and amiable virtues, in his weaknesses and in his abilities. And I think that everyone who reads his pages will feel that henceforth he knows the Sea Dyak of Sarawak better than he ever knew him before, and will come to the conclusion that, in spite of his faults, he is a very likeable man.

The Sea Dyaks, then, are worth knowing. They constitute a very valuable element in the population of Sarawak, not only from their numbers, but also from their force of character. They are active, hardworking,

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

CHAPTER IV

THE DYAK CHARACTER

General remarks—Kind to children—Industrious—Frugal—Honest—Two cases of theft—Curses—Honesty of children—Truthful—Curious custom—*Tugong Bula*—Hospitable—Morals—Desire for children—Divorce—Adultery—Dyak law concerning adultery—Dyak view of marriage—Unselfishness—Domestic affection—Example.

THE Dyaks are seen at their best in their own jungle homes, in the midst of their natural surroundings. The man who has only met the hangers-on of the towns has little idea of their true character. To one who knows them well, who has lived among them, and seen them at their work and at their play, there is something very attractive about the Dyaks. They are very human, and in many points are very like children, with the child's openness in telling his thoughts and showing his feelings, with the child's want of restraint in gratifying his wishes, the child's alternate moods of selfishness and affection, obedience and obstinacy, restlessness and repose. Like children, they live in the present, and take little thought for the future. Like children, they love passionately those who are kind to them, and trust absolutely those whom they recognize as their superiors.

They are cheerful, merry, and pleasure-loving. Fine dress is a passion, and the love, in both men and women, for bright colours is very marked, and yet somehow the

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban 056

157 brilliant colours that are seen at a Dyak feast are not at all displeasing. They are fond of song; the boatman sings as he paddles along. They are fond of games, and a Dyak feast is the occasion for playing many games, and for friendly trials of strength. They are fond of dancing, and the two Dyak dances—the Sword Dance and the War Dance—are always watched with interest by those present.

They are, like most Orientals, apathetic, and have no desire to rise above their present condition. But they are truthful and honest, and are faithful to those who have been kind to them; and these qualities cover a multitude of deficiencies, and are rather unusual in Eastern races.

855 888 609 They are kind and affectionate to children, and in all the many years I lived in Borneo I did not meet a single instance of cruelty to children. They are considerate to the aged, and parents who are past work are generally kindly treated by their children and grandchildren. They are most hospitable to strangers, and offer them food and shelter. And yet these are the people who some sixty years ago were dreaded pirates and terrible head-hunters! Their improvement under a kind and just Government has been wonderful.

461 The Dyaks are industrious and hard-working, and in the busy times of paddy-planting they work from early in the morning till dusk, only stopping for a meal at midday.

462 The division of labour between the men and the women is a very reasonable one, and the women have no more than their fair share of work. The men do the timber-felling, wood-cutting, clearing the land, house and boat building, carrying burdens, and the heavier work generally. The women help in the lighter part of the farm

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

is merely a means of publishing the fact that adultery has been committed, and no one is much hurt, but I have known cases where the man has been very badly wounded. No striking can take place after the matter has been talked about or confessed, and if one knew for certain of a case of adultery, one could easily stop this maltreatment of each other by talking about it publicly. The case is then settled by fining the guilty parties. Where both parties are married, and no divorce follows, the fining is no punishment, because each party pays to the other.

The Dyak view of the marriage state, especially where there are children, is by no means a low one. Though an Oriental people living in a tropical climate, their own traditional law allows a man to have only one wife. If, as sometimes is the case, a couple continue to live together after one of them has committed adultery, it is due to the fact that there are little children whom they do not want to part with, and not because they think lightly of the crime of adultery.

The Dyaks are very unselfish, and show a great deal of consideration for each other. They live together under one roof in large communities. Though each family has a separate room, all the rooms are usually connected one with another by little windows in the partition walls. This communal life accounts for the good-nature and amiability of the Dyaks. The happiness and comfort, to say nothing of the safety, of the community in times past, depend largely on their getting on well one with another. Therefore, as a natural result, there has grown up a great deal of unselfish regard for each other among the inmates of the Dyak village house.

Domestic affection between the different members of

matically fined. Both the prohibitions and the penalties are fully prescribed in the *adat*, or customary law of the Iban. General responsibility for preserving the ritual well-being of a long-house rests with its *tuai burong*, or augur, who also performs the important task of taking auguries for the community as a whole.

176. Every long-house also has a *tuai rumah*, or headman, whose principal duty is the safeguarding and administering of the customary law. As with the *tuai burong*, any cognate may succeed to this title, but it is usual for both positions to be held by male members of the core-group of founding *bilek-families*. To-day, the *tuai rumah* is accepted as the official intermediary between his community and the British administration, and Government has conferred upon him limited magisterial powers. Thus, in jural, as well as in ritual matters, the long-house community is a corporate group, for all its *bilek-families* willingly place themselves under the jurisdiction of their *tuai rumah*.

177. Finally, we come to the intrinsic and irreducible, corporate groups of Iban society—its *bilek-families*. These economically self-sufficient, allodial units, are essentially autonomous, and have a prescriptive right to decide the whereabouts of their place of abode. This means that the Iban long-house community is an open and not a closed group, for its component *bilek-families* are joined in free association, from which withdrawal is always permissible. At bottom, therefore, a long-house consists of a federation of independent families, whose privately owned apartments have been built side by side to produce a single, attenuated structure. An appreciation of this basic fact is imperative to the proper understanding of Iban social organization. From the outset, a long-house must be conceived of, not as a unified group, but rather as a territorial aggregation of discrete units: not as a communal pavilion, but as a street of privately owned, semi-detached houses. Within the long-house all *bilek-families* are at parity with one another. Differentiation in terms of wealth and influence, there always is, subordination, there certainly is not. Jurally each *bilek-family* is a power unto itself, managing its own affairs and acknowledging no other family to be its superior, or master. Thus, while a long-house is multipartite, it is without trace of any kind of hierarchical, or hegemonic organization. Under Iban *adat* all men are equals. During his lifetime a man may acquire high prestige and become an honoured leader, but rank is not inheritable, and there is no institution of chieftainship. Iban society is classless and egalitarian —and its members, untrammelled individualists, aggressive and proud in demeanour, lacking any taste for obeisance.

175 activity as a brave warrior and advance guard (buloh balang), and,
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624 after building up a following, an outstanding career as a war leader. Lintong (war-name, Moa Hari, "Cloud" or "Face of the Day"), was recognized as raja berani, as was the late Pengulu Gani Apai Engkamat of Bawang Assan.[18] The descendants of these men still enjoy prestige and deference as offspring of raja berani.

[171] The status of the raja berani parallels in several respects that of the Melanesian "big man."[19] Like the "big man," the raja
[183] berani was verbally persuasive. Fluency and cleverness of speech
[157] (landik bejako') are valued among the Ibans, and every successful leader at whatever level is an able speaker. Though a man may possess other admirable qualities and enjoy success in farming or business, if he cannot speak convincingly, any aspirations he may have for leadership are likely to go unrewarded.[20]

[157] Again, as with the "big man," the raja berani were highly competitive. There is both resistance to any appearance of submission and reluctance to the surrender of his independence on the part of the

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[18] Pengulu Gani's obituray appeared in the local papers, and in such foreign papers as the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette when he died in 1959.

[19] The modern Iban counterpart is the local politican.

[20] In longhouses where the tuai rumah is a poor speaker, a deputy (mandai) who is an able speaker represents him in welcoming guests and in helping to handle disputes.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

Iban, making the acquisition of followers and accumulation of political capital most difficult for the leader. Yet, at the same time, the Iban is willing, even desirous, of giving his support to any leader from whom he anticipates rewards.[21] Aware of this, the raja berani built followings through promises of adventure, plunder (perepasan) and beads (antu pala'). Because of the fragile nature of ties between leaders and followers, the former constantly sought to re-inforce their holds on their anembiak ("followers"). As Sahlins wrote of the "big man," so, too, the raja berani formerly (and his modern politician counterpart)

> "combines with an ostensible interest in the general welfare a more profound measure of self-interested cunning and economic calculation. His gaze. . . is fixed unswervingly to the main chance.[22] His every public action is designed to make a competitive and invidious comparison with others, to show a standing above the masses that is produce of hisown manufacturing."

The competition to build and maintain a following exerted considerable pressure both on the raja berani as it does on the modern Iban

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[21] Traditional leader-follower relations were built on exchange of loyalty for booty and heads. Present ones are based on kantau, gifts not infrequently of money.

[22] An ambitious young Iban, forced to choose between running for Council Negri and accepting the scholarship offered him to the United States, chose the latter, calculating the long-range gains to be greater. (1963-291).

582 421 612 be so if siblings married, for they would receive only within their own bilik; hence, this is a tabooed union (jadi mali)."

582 602 612 A second reason given for preference of marriage within the kindred is that it permits maintenance of kinties. Marriage with non kinsmen weakens the network of the kaban both by failure to unite with kinsmen as well as by the introduction of strangers.

> "If we marry with strangers, people whom we don't know, we already are removing ourselves at some distance from our kinsmen. That's why we always (sic) look for a close kinsman, so that we won't break the ties (putus tali)."

582 554 612 789 A third reason offered by every informant with whom marriage regulations were discussed was of a more supernatural nature, but related to the first two reasons already discussed. Marriage within the kaban permits marriage with a person who has the evil eye or in some other way is a bearer of misfortune. It also insures that one's child or relative doesn't marry down, with some one of a lower class. How is the person of [558] lower class, the bearer of the evil eye recognized? The person of a lower class is a member of a family which never has enough rice, a descendant [[57]] of debt slaves, or a person plagued by failure. The Iban are highly motivated towards demonstrative achievement and, traditionally, the single ultimate criterion of success was a bountiful harvest year after year. 567 426 Occasionally, poor harvests and other misfortunes combined to produce circumstances in which a man had to become a debt slave (ulun leka rian or ulun buah rian) in order to survive. The debt slave was considered of

855 593 515 Older brothers and sisters care for younger ones, and most children learn to cook at least rice by age ten. Parents wash the clothing of the very young, but by age seven or eight, children begin to assume responsibility for washing out their few play-clothers and eventually each individual [867] washes his own clothes when he bathes. The young Iban is taught early the necessity and value of independence.

157 865 576 The absence of physical restraint and the assurance of an approving response to most of his activities, encourages the Iban to be a self-reliant and confident individual. No greater offense can be committed against the Iban than bringing him to shame (malu), and members of the society learn means both of eschewing speech and actions which may shame another, and of rationalizing any feelings of shame or guilt which they 851 571 may have. A hierarchical order forms in which hostilities are exercised and expressed against weaker members in the form of teasing[5] and scolding, and a solidarity develops between the majority-strong vis-a-vis the minor-561 593 ity-weak. This solidarity supports the child against elders, and he finds that the opinion of peers is to be more highly valued than any rebuffs from [857] his parents. After all, he spends much more time with peers than with parents, and he quickly ceases to be dependent on his parents, who, in turn, are afraid of alienating the child.

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[5] Asked why a group of teen-agers incessantly teased one member of their number, a young girl replied, Enda' nyaman nadai orang ditundi' ("It's not pleasant if there is no one to tease").

18:Sutlive E,M-S (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

We have seen that less than one half the bilik-families have enough rice to last them from one harvest until the next, and must supplement their own production with sago, rice purchased from the sale of produce or from wages, or grants from the Welfare Department. Again, not all men show the aggressive drives manifest in Keling, and personality types ranges from the strong, dominant male who is quite self-assured, to the manang bali', the transvestite who, with confused sex-role identity, escapes unbearable conflict through assumption of the healer's role.[5]

The ideal of self-sufficiency, with strong emphases upon independence, skill, courage, persistence and adventure, has been the norm by which individual performances have been measured. Consequently, while Iban society may in one sense be described as egalitarian, as we will discuss in the next section of this chapter, it also is highly competitive, and from the early history of Iban predations until the present, many members strive to get ahead of their fellows.

Judged by the scale of self-sufficiency, traditional Iban society was divided into three classes. At the highest level were those members who were able to farm successfully, achieving thereby an independence from others and a reputation for good standing with the gods. If a fortuitous

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[5] The Iban shaman or manang does not seek acts of bravery (ukai nuju pemerani), yet, in an interesting bit of irony, after his ordination, (bebangun) it is he who enjoins in battle the fears of other members of Iban society as projected in antu and incubus (buyu').